29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
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person is a woman or a girl, a skirt is substituted for the skin, and for the girl some strings of yellow beads are added. If the family can afford it, it will buy a couple of yards of white cotton cloth to serve as a winding sheet and a cow skin is bound round this. The grave of a commoner is not dug in the hut itself but outside, near the compound. It is put near the surrounding reed fence, in a place where passers-by will not walk over it. As for a chief, the grave is excavated to a depth of about six feet but it is not nearly so wide, since the body is not buried lying on a bier, but is placed on the bare earth. The niche or alcove is cut out of the side, however, and a hen is placed under the head. [231] During the funeral the mourners wail in the customary manner, and this is the signal for the warriors, who hitherto have been out of sight in the cattle byre, to charge forward, armed as usual with spears and shields, to salute their dead comrade. The grave is mudded over on the fourth day with [765] the customary beer drinking and libation over the grave, and [782] the relatives abstain for a while from dancing and the use of [535] personal adornments. [201]

The mourning is not really completed, however, until the [765] deceased person has been commemorated at a funeral dance. [535] This is a strict obligation upon the relatives, even though it may be a year or more before it is fulfilled. Since the commoner is not sufficiently important or wealthy to be given a [527] dance all to himself, funeral dances are held periodically in [528] the principal villages. The district turns up in force for these communal 'All Souls' days, for besides the attraction of the dance—and any Shilluk will cheerfully walk miles just for the pleasure of a dance—there is also the extra treat of a share in the meat when the affair is over. Everybody who is commemorating his dead must give an offering, a bull if the [526] deceased is a man or a woman, a sheep if a child. The dance follows the pattern of the more important funeral dances. There is no tomb, however, so the drums mounted in forked sticks are made the focus of attention. The warriors, armed with spear and shield, make the customary encirclement of the village and then advance to the drums, chanting their